HQ HomeBrew Presents

Dice for Buffs, Debuffs, & Effects in HeroQuest

by Lord Drucifer

Book keeping for my HeroQuest game is relatively simple, everything with the exception of gold, has a visual marker. If a Hero has something, the player will have a card, a chit, or a die to represent it. This means that if they don't have one of these items, then they don't have whatever is represented by that marker.

Keeping track of a Hero's bonuses and penalties can be tedious and boring. Physical items for players to have in their hands stimulates their tactile senses. This adds a layer to the game play, while keeping the players invested in the details. HeroQuest comes with monsters, furniture, doors, chits, and cards, all of these add to the tactile game while keeping visual attention. Giving modifiers a physical and visual presence improves the game experience. Most players will not care that I have a set of guide lines that I use for this. Once the players see them in use, and are experiencing them, they gravitate to the concepts without the need of a rule book.

Heroic Brew
You are surprised to find a leather bag hanging on the wall. If you drink its contents before you attack, you can make two attacks instead of one. This may only be used once. Do not return this card to the deck.

Buffs & Debuffs

What is a Buff and a Debuff? Buffs are temporary bonuses that adjusts the game states or situations to the advantage of the individual using them. *Heroic Brew* is a type of Buff allowing for the hero to make two physical attacks in one turn.

A Debuff is just the opposite, it applies a disadvantage to the individual or situation. The *Ogre Grog* is a type of Debuff. It causes the hero to lose a Mind Point for an undetermined period of time, possibly permanently.

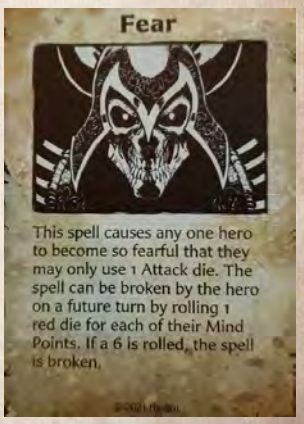
Ogre Grog
It is considered a rare delicacy amongst collectors.
Drink this potion and roll 1 combat die. If it lands on a skull, lose 1 Mind Point. On any other roll result, you are unharmed.
Cost: 20 gold coins

Persistent, Temporary & Intermittent Effects

Effects are different than buffs though they do overlap and effects can cause buffs or debuffs. Effects cause a change which is the result of an action, item, or situation, within the game. There are three types of effects, Persistent, Temporary and Intermittent.

Plate Mail
Armor—This heavy metal armor gives you 2 extra Defend dice. However, because it is so heavy, you may only roll 1 red die for movement while wearing it. May be combined with the helmet and/or shield. May not be worn by the wizard.
850 gold coins

A Persistent Effect has a multi-turn influence that adjusts how a given situation is resolved. The *Plate Mail Armor* is a type of Persistent Effect, it is “always on”. The Hero player will always roll 2 additional dice in defense, and the Hero will always be reduced in movement, unless another effect cancels either of these effects.


Fear
This spell causes any one hero to become so fearful that they may only use 1 Attack die. The spell can be broken by the hero on a future turn by rolling 1 red die for each of their Mind Points. If a 6 is rolled, the spell is broken.

A Temporary Effect only applies in a specific situation. These situations happen because of an in game event and have a have a finite duration. Rolling for the spell *Fear* is a type of Temporary Effect. It will

Firey Battle Axe
Weapon - This fire enchanted Battle Axe, gives you an attack strength of 4 Attack Dice. On an attack roll of 2 or more skulls, add 1 more skull as damage from the fire.
Cannot be used by a wizard.
Cannot be used, or carried, with a shield.

only last as long as the hero continues to fail their rolls.

Intermittent Effects are applied at semi random times during the game. Like Temporary Effects they have a short duration. Unlike Temporary Effects they are weighted by the frequency with which they can occur. The *Fiery Battle Axe* has an Intermittent Effect. It will not always occur, only sometimes, and for an extremely short period.

Dice in HeroQuest

HeroQuest has two types of dice. The first is the classic 6 sided die with pips in quantities of 1 to 6. These are dice that almost every player will recognize as a random chance generator. Though they may not use that terminology.

The second is the HeroQuest signature Combat Dice. These dice have a Skull on three sides, a White Shield on two sides, and a single side with a Black Shield. I think of them as fractional or percentage dice. Half or 50% of the die is a Skull, 1/3rd or 33% is the White Shield, and 1/6th or 16% is the Black Shield. The main draw of HeroQuest, for the Hero players at least, is generally ease of play, I do not integrate the polyhedral dice popular in other games. The limitations of the 6 sides seems to be more than enough to provide the variations needed with one die shape.

Classic Dice

When rolled, classic dice deal in random discrete quantities and comparative references. How many squares a Hero can move, or how many Body Points they regain from a potion. These are quantitative values derived by the classic dice. Rolling under a targeted number such as a Mind Point value, or over the Body Point value of a given target. These are comparative references, where the result of the classic dice roll is compared to a known value to determine success or failure.

Additionally classic dice can work as an easy temporary value tracking system. When using them, choose a color that clearly stands out from the normal dice. Once a color is chosen, stay consistent. Changing colors later only causes confusion. Remember, consistency is key for player enjoyment, they trust you to don't lose that. Another method of differentiating dice is by using a larger or smaller die in the roll rather than a color change.

Using Classic Dice for Buffs and Debuffs

All Buffs should have corresponding Debuffs. This is a design choice and can be used to balance out game play. When performing rolls that have Buffs, and or Debuffs, it is recommended that all of the dice be rolled by the active player at the same time. In this way multiple effects can be applied to a single roll of the dice and the player is the individual responsible for the result. Buy in from the player for a negative result is far easier if they have rolled the dice. Players will generally take owner-ship of their rolls. Here are some examples for using classic dice with Buffs or Debuffs.

Movement Buff: Roll a Yellow die in conjunction with the Red Movement Dice. This will determine the value of the bonus received adding to the number of squares the Hero may move that turn. Zargon can then use it as a determining factor for other situations like a sensor alarm trap which goes off if the heroes are not moving stealthily, or some other devious trickery.

Movement Debuff: Roll a Blue die in conjunction with the Red Movement Dice. This will determine the value of the negative received, subtracting the number of squares the Hero may move that turn from their roll. This is particularly effective to use when the Hero has a movement buff or is in a location with a variable difficulty for movement, say a swamp or some other unstable location. The result should stop at 0. Heroes cannot move “negative” squares.

Healing Buff: Roll an Orange die in conjunction with a healing effect, a Healing Potion or a spell that heals. In this way the Hero's player can visually see the advantage that they have gained. This provides an “I'm lucky” feeling for the player. They may then make rash decisions or actions based on that positive feeling.

Healing Debuff: Roll a Black die in conjunction with a healing effect, a Healing Potion or a spell that heals. Heavily playing into the evil eye, life draining effects of Dread magic, the Black dice will provide a repellent visual reference for the Hero's player. The result of the Black die is subtracted from the total result of the healing effect. The player will feel conflicted when making this roll because they want “high” numbers but not on this one die. Negative results should be applied even if the Hero loses more body points from their “healing”.

Body Test Buff: Roll a Pink die in conjunction with a Body Points test. Some players consider Pink to be a less masculine color, I find it suits my humor for the burly muscle bound meat mounds of Barbarian and Berserker to roll this color. As a Buff it adds the result of the die to the test. The player can take joy in having a bonus and Zargon can then use it to trigger other effects.

Body Test Debuff: Roll a Green die in conjunction with a Body Points test. As with other debuffs that the player must roll, they will feel conflicted. The result of this die will subtract from the total rolled by the player. The result may cause the Body Points test to fail, in which case the player will accept the result far easier because they rolled it and not Zargon.

Mind Test Buff: Roll a White die in conjunction with a Mind Points test. Mind points are the most under utilized statistic so any time there is a bonus the players don't really value it. I recommend the use of Mind Points for some trap discovery options. For example the “undiscoverable” traps from various quest lines could have a discovery number over 6, justifying the Mind Points statistic and not just railroading the Heroes with no opportunity to find or avoid the trap.

Mind Test Debuff: Roll a Purple die in conjunction with a Mind Points test. Purple is thematically the color for Dread in all the artwork released by Avalon Hill / Hasbro. Wizards and others with Mind Points greater than 3 might not worry about Mind Point tests. However if the test is on a single die roll, a debuff becomes devastating. Additionally with a temporary debuff like this, even the simplest of spells that require a failed Mind Points roll become a real threat to the Hero that must make the test.

These are just a handful of examples for how to use the Classic Dice as temporary representations of Buffs and Debuffs for the players to roll. Conceivably Zargon can also use them for the forces of Dread if there are Buffs or Debuff that would be applied to enemies.

Using the Buff or Debuff die roll result as a random trigger for other actions in the game can increase the unpredictability for players that have an extensive history playing HeroQuest.

Classic Dice – Temporary Value Tracking

What is temporary value tracking? It is short term monitoring of a given value in a particular situation. In HeroQuest the rule for tracking a temporary situations generally involves the use of the Skull Tiles. These are the little square chits with a skull printed on one side, and a wall, trap, or secret door, printed on the revers side. Their use is for damage tracking on monsters. The Zargon Player is to stack them under the Monsters that have taken damage but have not yet died.

This method of tracking can leave a bit to be desired. The Monster or Monsters have to be constantly picked up and the chits counted, or, the miniature topples from the stack under them, or, the chits are in use already on the board in another fashion. The tracking of additional stacking affects, along with the Body Points, can add more clutter to the board. One solution that has been used to alleviate some of these issues involves placing the chits on the cards used to represent the monsters. This can work if there are enough cards for each creature that may need them, and there are enough chits available. Still the stacks may be difficult to gauge from across the table, and which stack is which monster can also be confusing. These issues may not exist on all gaming tables. Some players exclusively use the published quests and are not inconvenienced, or, only minorly so. However, when playing some homebrews with large numbers of difficult enemies, this situation becomes more apparent.

The use of the Classic Dice of varying colors can reduce these issues, while providing an easy to see reference for all of the players, and minimize the amount of board space needed for the record keeping. The process is simple.

Select the card of the monster to be tracked, in this example the Pumpkin Knight from reddit. when the the Pumpkin Knight takes damage, use a brightly colored die to denote the damage received. I recommend using a die with a high contrast color to the art on the card for ease of viewing. Another option would be to stick with the same color for every creature so that the Hero players do not get thrown off on what is being represented. This process trades ease of use for valuable table space. If there are multiples of the same type of enemy in a combat multiple dice of differing colors may be used to represent the damage.

For cases where the enemy is a multi-turn threat this is an excellent method of keeping track of the buffs and debuffs for all of the enemy's stat values.

So when it comes to temporary, intermittent, random, or quest long persistent effects, what can be done? I use dice of various colors. This allows all the players to see the effects in action as well as allowing the player to interact with the results of the effect. After all, they are generally the individual rolling the dice. The trick is to be consistent with your colors and effects. Inconsistency leads to confusion, accusations of cheating, and hard feelings, none of which are good for a successful HeroQuest game. Some visual examples.

2 Attack Dice debuff

2 poison modifier

Move reduction

Boss Stat change

HeroQuest Dice

As with Buffs and Debuffs, all Persistent, Temporary, and Intermittent Effects provide an opportunity for opposition effects. These are the effects that have a weighted probability of happening, 16%, 33%, and 50%. As with the Buffs and Debuffs, it is recommended that all of the dice be rolled by the active player at the same time and for the same reasons. Most often these dice are used in low quantities, 1 or 2, there may be occurrences where to increase the chance of the effect happening more dice are used, but that tends to desensitize the players to the mechanics. I want to keep their tension high. Here are some examples for using HeroQuest dice for persistent and variable effects.

Monster Spawn: Roll a Yellow die in conjunction with the trap triggering or being avoided, but not disarmed. This represents the sound of the trap being triggered attracting a wandering monster or a group of wandering monsters. On a Skull 1 monster, on a white shield 2 monsters, and on a black shield 3 monsters. This keeps the players on their toes, particularly because pit traps also provide negatives if the hero is in it.

Chilled Reflexes: Roll a Blue die in conjunction with the Attack roll to represent the hero suffering from a chilled effect. Their muscles work but not as well as they might like. If the die rolls a Skull it nullifies a Skull rolled on the Attack Dice. Thus turning a single hit to a complete miss or a massive hit of 3 to a hit of only 2. The chills come and go and will not always have a negative effect. The intermittent nature of the effect and the fact that the player is rolling the die adds to the tension for the player. They are in essence, fighting themselves.

Healing Surge: Roll an Orange die in conjunction with the Attack roll to represent a random heal over time. This can be used for either Heroes or Monsters. Make it dependent on dealing damage and it becomes a life draining effect. This fits the flavor for vampires, or other life stealing monsters. Reverse this and use it with Defense Dice and it becomes a boon healing if all damage was negated. Trigger it on the black shield or this will make the receiver of the heal extremely difficult to subdue.

Grip of Fear: Roll a Black die in conjunction with an Attack or Defense roll. The result negates a portion of the desired outcome. For example in an Attack roll the Hero's Skull count is reduced, in their Defense roll their White Shields are reduced. Increasing the difficulty of the fear is easily done by changing the symbol that needs to be rolled. A Black Shield is a mild shake, a White Shield becomes an unwelcome site and Skulls are out right terrifying. Just be consistent with the threat level.

Constitutional Crisis: Roll a Pink die in conjunction with the Defense roll against poison, venom, or gas attacks, or when taking damage from poison, venom, or gas traps. If the result is a Black Shield the hero reduces one of their base stats by a value of 1. This temporary reduction will remain until the Hero can stop and do nothing for a full turn while they catch their breath and get themselves back in order. This effect is cumulative and can be fatal even though it starts out as temporary. Reducing the Body points to “0” will kill the Hero and reducing the Mind Points to “0” will put them into shock.

Poison Blade: Roll a Green die in conjunction with an Attack roll. A Skull results in the target being poisoned if they took damage. Or it can be rolled every round to represent poison working through the system of someone that has already been poisoned. Poison dart traps and poisoned weapons become far more dangerous if the poison continues to cause damage randomly over time. The duration can be determined by the strength of the poison, after all a Skull is easier to roll than a Black Shield.

Unblockable Attack: Roll Red dice in conjunction with an Attack roll. This represents the attacks that could not be fended off. Some results will be misses but some will be hits. This replaces the multiple rolls necessary for multiple attacks. If a monster has two attacks at four dice each, rolling once for all eight dice reduces the wasted time. Plus it removes the question of when to defend, the first attack or the second, by making it obvious which dice are unblockable.

Magic Damage: Roll Purple dice when resolving magical effects, resisting spell effects or, the effects of a potion or magical special ability. Purple, being the color of Dread thematically, makes sense to visually represent the mystical happenings in the game. Purple dice can be used to represent magical effects of weapons, armor, or any other item where a random effect may be triggered.

There are official release dice in the following colors: The 2021 Base Game

Frozen Horror

Gen-Con Collectors Dice

Dread Veil Collectors Dice

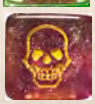
Spirit Queen's Torment

Crypt of Perpetual Darkness

Jungles of Delthrak Collectors Dice

Prophecy of Telor

First Light Base Game

 First Light Collectors Dice